SECTION III-4
REMOVAL OF THE MILKING UNIT

4. REMOVAL OF THE MILKING UNIT

4.1 SHUT-OFF VACUUM TO UNIT BEFORE REMOVING CLUSTER

Vacuum should always be shut off before teat cups are removed. This is accomplished by using a valve or clamp on the longer milk hose or a shut off valve on the claw. When milk flow lessens at the end of milking, as visually detected by the milker, the vacuum is manually shut off before removing the unit from the udder. Pulling a unit off when it is still under vacuum needs to be avoided to minimize teat end damage.

Fig. 1. Using shut-off valve to remove unit

4.2 AUTOMATIC TAKE-OFFS

Automatic take-offs (ATO) are becoming increasingly more popular in milk parlours as a labour-saving device. The automatic take-off removes the milking unit from the sheep once the milk flow is sensed to be below a certain threshold. The ATOs can range from simple vacuum operated units controlled by milk flow float sensors to sophisticated electronic devices (Fig. 12).

Fig. 2. Automatic take-off

In general the ATOs should do the following:

- Sense the end of milk flow without over-milking
- Shut off vacuum to the claw before starting to retract the unit
- Have as little restriction to milk flow path from claw to pipeline as possible
- Be easily cleaned in place
- Be regularly checked for efficiency of removal

Some milking management points to consider when using ATOs are the following:

- A ewe with only a single gland may not be milked out properly using the automatic take-off.
- Ewes must be prepared properly for good milk let down.